

GOOD FIRE

Tending Native Lands



TEACHER GUIDE

The Oakland Museum of California welcomes you and your students to experience *Good Fire: Tending Native Lands*. This teacher guide will help you prepare for your students' visit. Teachers are also invited to visit OMCA for a free planning visit in advance of a field trip.

The Oakland Museum of California occupies the unceded, ancestral land of the Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation who, for hundreds of generations, have belonged to the land that is now known as the East Bay. These peoples continue to inhabit their ancestral homeland and work to preserve its cultural and natural history and fight for its sacred sites and cultural resources. OMCA's full Native Accountability Statement and Land Acknowledgement can be found on the [OMCA website](#).

Exhibition Content

This exhibition examines the past, present, and future of fire in California through the lens of Indigenous fire practices. Fire is an essential component of healthy California ecosystems and is a critical component of Native lifeways for many California Native peoples. This exhibition focuses on Native fire practices in Northern California specifically.

Exhibition sections include:

WORKING WITH FIRE | For thousands of years, Native Californians have practiced *cultural burning* to steward ecosystems across California. In this immersive gallery space, visitors will see the community-centric atmosphere of a *cultural burn* and the interconnectedness of Indigenous science, fire ecology, and Native artistry.

GOOD FIRE, INTERRUPTED | As settlers colonized California, violence and oppression against Native peoples resulted in the suppression of Indigenous fire practices. This section highlights the legacy of fire through California history, the effects of Native genocide and fire suppression, and Native resistance to colonialism.

FUTURE OF FIRE | Native tribes and organizations have worked tirelessly to affirm their Indigenous sovereignty and rights to practice *cultural burning*. The presence of *good fire* is intertwined with Land Back and water rights efforts led by Indigenous peoples throughout California.

Key Exhibit Messages

- Diverse Indigenous peoples in California have been using fire to steward California's varied array of ecosystems since time immemorial.
- Not all fire is scary and bad. Fire can be beneficial: Healthy and thriving communities of humans and non-humans in California depend on good fire.
- Fire is critical to the cultures and lifeways of many Indigenous people in California, including foods, basketry, regalia, medicine, spirituality, stewarding healthy ecosystems, and more.
- Fire suppression practices, rooted in extractive and violent settler-colonialism, have led directly to the more dangerous, destructive, and unhealthy megafires that we see today.
- Building a more sustainable future with fire in California requires moving toward more decolonized practices and affirming tribal sovereignty where tribes have agency over their homelands.

Understanding the Student Conversation Guide

This guide:

- Helps teachers, chaperones, and students better manage their self-guided visit to *Good Fire: Tending Native Lands*.
- Promotes student-driven inquiry. Students are prompted to consider particular topics/themes, but are given the opportunity to choose what to focus on within the exhibition.
- Encourages student conversation and reflection about these topics to help students consider and extend their experience in the exhibition.

Facilitation Suggestions

- Bring enough printed copies of the student guide, writing surfaces and pencils for each student. The student guide is designed for 8.5x11 paper. A limited number of printed student guides will be available at OMCA's School Group Entrance. No pens are allowed in the galleries.
- Allow students to work in pairs or small groups. If any student(s) seems to be struggling with the prompts, check in with them and encourage them to work with a peer to solve any challenges.
- Try to create a safe space for dialogue. We encourage students to work with a partner, however, participation in dialogue should be voluntary. Encourage students to participate however they're comfortable.

Additional Resources

- **[Teaching about Cultural Burning & Good Fire](#)**: Resource from Redbud Resource Group about how to discuss *cultural burning* and *good fire* with students.
- **[Tribal EcoRestoration Alliance \(TERA\)](#)**: An intertribal group that works to revitalize ecology, economy, and culture through Indigenous-led stewardship.
- **[California Indian Basketweavers' Association](#)**: A group that preserves and promotes basketweaving while providing a healthy physical, social, spiritual and economic environment for basketweavers.
- **[Sogorea Te' Land Trust](#)**: A Native-women-led land trust focused on returning Indigenous land back to Indigenous people, restoring sacred relationship to ancestral land, and cultural revitalization.
- **[7 Essential Understandings of California Native History and Culture](#)**: Resource from Redbud Resource Group and California Indian Museum and Cultural Center.
- **[Restoring Tribal Tending of Black Oaks in Yosemite Valley](#)**: A short film about tribal stewardship, and the importance of fire in acorn harvesting.
- **[Tending the Wild: Cultural Burning](#)**: An excerpt from the PBS series, *Tending the Wild*, on the significance of *cultural burning* in Native culture.

Vocabulary

ancestral homelands

ecosystem restoration

Native lifeways

colonization

fire cycle

Native sovereignty

cultural burning

fire suppression

regalia

cultural suppression

Land Back movement

stewardship